
Specimen of rufous-morph Augur Buzzard

Buteo augur from Zimbabwe

William S. Clark

L'auteur rapporte la découverte d'un spécimen de la forme rousse de la Buse augure *Buteo augur*, souvent considérée comme une sous-espèce (*archeri*) ou une espèce distincte (Buse d'Archer), qui avait été collecté en l'actuel Zimbabwe, loin de sa distribution normale, en Somalie. Il était toutefois identique à certains spécimens de Somalie.

Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur* has a rufous colour morph that in adult plumage has a variable amount of rufous on its underparts and underwing-coverts, from completely rufous to rufous restricted to the flanks and belly; they also show rufous on the upperside of the secondaries. The underparts and underwing-coverts of normal pale-morph adult Augur Buzzards are completely white.

Rufous-morph Augur Buzzards occur primarily in northern Somalia², where they were described as 'Archer's Buzzards'.¹ Clark² discussed why Archer's Buzzard should not be considered specifically and concluded it to be a subspecies of Augur Buzzard. I now consider it to be a rufous colour-morph of Augur Buzzard and not a subspecies. A subspecies should occupy a geographic range exclusive of individuals of other subspecies. Adult Augur Buzzards with a variable amount of rufous on their underparts, from none (typical Augur Buzzard) to some to much, have also been collected in the same locations in Somalia as adults with completely rufous underparts².

Thus, it was with great interest that I found a specimen of a rufous-morph Augur Buzzard (Fig 1) in the collection of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria (TM 40131). It had been collected in present-day Zimbabwe. The specimen tag contained the following information: *Buteo jackal* or *Buteo augur*. Location: Vumba, 4300' Southern Rhodesia. Adult female. 8 Sept. '14. L 22°", W 16°", TL 7°" Iris: greyish-brown, Bill: Black, lower mandible base pale yellow-green. P. A. Sheppard.

This specimen is within the range of Augur Buzzard but not far from the range of the similar Jackal Buzzard *Buteo rufofuscus*. As in adult plumage the latter also shows much rufous on the underparts and also has a rufous tail, could this specimen be of an adult Jackal or adult hybrid Augur/Jackal? Both of these possibilities can be eliminated by the specimen's lack of black on the throat, belly and

underwing-coverts shown by all adult Jackal Buzzards. A hybrid would show some black in these areas.

I compared a photograph of the Zimbabwe specimen with rufous-morph Augur Buzzard (Archer's Buzzard) specimens collected by Archer & Godman¹ in Somalia deposited in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) and others from Somalia in the Natural History Museum, Tring (NHM). Its underparts appeared exactly like two adult males, AMNH 534359 and NHM 1923.8.7.7383, and an adult female, AMNH 534355. Further, its uppertail was identical to that of AMNH 534355.

One would expect that the genetic signal for rufous underparts of this morph of Augur Buzzard would spread beyond the core area of northern Somalia. Therefore, it is not surprising that rufous-morph Augur Buzzard specimens have also been collected in nearby Ethiopia and Kenya², and live buzzards have been seen in Djibouti². But, it is remarkable that this specimen occurred so far from the core area. A final question is: can or should these rufous-morph adult Augur Buzzards still be called 'Archer's Buzzards'?

Acknowledgements

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References

1. Archer, G.A. and Godman, E.M. 1937. *The Birds of British Somaliland and the Gulf of Aden*. Vol 1. London, UK: Oliver & Boyd.



Figure 1. Rufous-morph Augur Buzzard *Buteo augur* (Archer's Buzzard) specimen in the Transvaal Museum, collected in present-day Zimbabwe, far from its usual range in Somalia (William S. Clark)

2. Clark, W.S. 1996. The validity of Archer's Buzzard as a species. *J. Afr. Raptor Biol.* 11: 11–13. 2301 S. Whitehouse Circle, Harlingen, TX 78550, USA.

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